



# OPEN DOORS

The Newsletter of the Northern Illinois PFLAG Chapters

## President's Column

As members of PFLAG we have some difficult waters to navigate as we do our utmost to support people who are transgender, gender expansive, gender non-conforming, and gender queer. The first step, obviously, is to understand what is meant by each of these terms. Plenty of websites exist that can aid our understanding, two of which are [www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org) and [www.transstudent.org](http://www.transstudent.org); it's a place to start.

A real problem exists, however, in that terminology changes quickly and that there is not general agreement on definitions. Just when I thought I could explain the difference between "gender identity" and "gender non-conforming/gender expansive," I read something that challenges my understanding. In preparing for this article, I read through a model school policy followed by policies drawn up by Berwyn South School District 100, Bloomington District 87, and one from the Chicago Public Schools. Each one includes a definition of terms, each slightly different.

If we, members of PFLAG, have difficulty understanding all of the nuances of gender, think of the confusion for the general public. Obviously the hot topic at the moment is the use of bathrooms and locker rooms. We have come to understand that a transgender person has a body that doesn't match their gender identity. Furthermore, we understand that such a person is not going to flaunt those body parts that are in conflict with their inner sense of who they are. No, they're going to hide them because of embarrassment or shame. In other words, no trans student is going to go into a bathroom or locker room and flash the other students. It's a non-issue. But there are plenty of parents who don't understand this, and there are plenty of folks in the Illinois General Assembly who don't either.

Palatine School District 211 recently came under fire for failing to comply with the Federal Office of Education's civil rights policy as it affects transgender students' use of bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity. On the heels of this suit is the bill proposed by Rep. Tom Morrison (R-Palatine) that, if passed, would require students to use the bathroom/locker room that matches the sex assigned at birth and the chromosomes a person has. We understand the horrific consequences of such a bill, but a group of parents within the district, "Parents for Privacy," apparently do not. Now some parents within another school district, Glenbard District 87, are proposing a school policy very similar to Morrison's bill.

If only a reasoned and calm conversation could take place. If only we could truly educate an ill-informed public as PFLAG's mission statement used to read. We can't let ourselves become inflamed by angry rhetoric of our own. Instead, we must seek out an opportunity to enlighten these frightened parents, for that is what they are. Angry confrontations will not serve our purpose. Let's be true to our PFLAG mission and its values, supporting, educating, and advocating so that transgender and gender non-conforming/gender expansive youth can have learning environments that promote their health and well being.

- Toni Weaver



PFLAG is a non-profit, tax-exempt, all volunteer, local community-based organization of parents, relatives and friends of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons. PFLAG is not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, economic or political group.

OPEN DOORS is a publication of the Northern Illinois PFLAG chapters. Articles that appear do not necessarily reflect the opinions of PFLAG, its Board of Directors or members. We reserve the right to edit any submissions. Priority is given to original work by the membership.

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[www.pflagillinois.org](http://www.pflagillinois.org)  
[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

Be sure to like  
PFLAG Council of Northern IL  
on



The official rules of the Drag Show and Lake Forest College ACPs are as follows:

- Try to carpool as there is limited parking.
- No weapons, drugs, or alcohol allowed in
- No outside food or drink
- You are subject to being checked by security
- PFLAG members will be given priority seating. Please let Toni Weaver know ASAP if you will be attending (tweaver@earthlink.net)
- No touching audience members or students or queens (you are allowed to tip the queens though)
- Everyone must have a government issued ID (drivers license, state ID, passport)
- It is an 18+ event ONLY (unfortunately, anyone under the age of 18 will not be allowed in)

**All donations  
collected  
go to PFLAG!**



# in Our Chapters?

## HINSDALE CHAPTER

By Barb Medley

Our February meeting was on Super Bowl Sunday. All of our meetings have been very well attended, with enthusiastic participation. This meeting was no exception, and we also savored treats worthy of a Super Bowl appetizer table. It was great! Our speaker was Salimah Turner, whose presentation "Working with African American Youth" is one she has used for Youth Outlook Training. Salima is a clinical social worker based in Oak Park, and she addressed talking about LGBT issues with African American families, which is enhanced by understanding their cultural history. Common ground issues she focused on included family structure, which is important and includes traditional, non-traditional, blended and extended families, as well as families of choice. It is important to be sensitive in communicating with these families, and being careful to not be intrusive. It is culturally common for African American families to avoid discussing their LGBTQ family members. A common term for gay and lesbian is same-gender living. What can we do to offer culturally sensitive support? Salimah suggested providing a safe space for discussion, being empathetic, being culturally understanding, being mindful of language, being open and asking questions. She suggested reading the essay, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," written in 1989 by Peggy McIntosh.

Our March speaker will be Owen Daniel-McCarter, the Policy and Advocacy Director of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance.



## PTI CHICAGO CHAPTER

By Joelle Spiegel

The Chicago chapter of Parents of Transgender Individuals convened on February 11 at The Center on Halsted for our monthly meeting. Although our founder and leader, Arlene Collins, was absent, we nevertheless got together to share support, inspiration, and build community. While we did not have a speaker at this meeting, we were fortunate to be able to spend time with the son of one of our dear members who tragically

passed away recently. He moved us all as he spoke about his family's experience and the positive impact that PTI had on his mother as she supported her son. In addition, we held an open forum wherein members in attendance raised issues they were currently dealing with, sought support and resource advice, and offered a listening ear and the wisdom that comes with experience to newer members.

Our next meeting will be held on March 10, 2016, when our guest speaker will be Deb Wilkie, LCPC. PTI of Chicago meets at The Center on Halsted, 3656 North Halsted, Chicago on the second Thursday of each month.



## Deerfield CHAPTER

By Janet Svatos

### SILK ROAD RISING:

"Ground Zero Mosque", a play written by Malik Khoury, PFLAG's October guest speaker, will have its world premiere March 24<sup>th</sup> through May 1<sup>st</sup> at the Silk Road Rising Theater (Chicago Temple Building at 77 Washington Blvd). Tickets are available online or by calling (312) 857-1234 EXT 201. Malik was so thoughtful and loved speaking to our group, that he'd like to offer a discount to PFLAG members. To qualify for a discount mention you're a PFLAG member. Performances are Thursdays – Sundays.

### NORTHSORE PARENTS OF TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS:

A group for Parents of Transgender Individuals has formed in Winnetka. Although many of the children are ages 5 - 17, all are welcome. This is the only PTI group on the North Shore. For more information, please go to our website:

[pflagillinois.org](http://pflagillinois.org)

### GUEST SPEAKER:

We were so honored to welcome our guest speaker this month. We welcomed 33 people at our meeting to hear her story, including three new families. Our guest speaker was a transgender female, recently turned 30, who has identified as female for a year. She grew up in a conservative, very Catholic, Asian household, the youngest of 3 boys, where her differences were recognized but never acknowledged or explored by her

family. She described feeling confused, alone and without a community inside or outside her home – no place to fit in or belong.

She studied fashion design in college, finding in it a way of channeling her qualities to the world and revealing how she regarded women's bodies and - by extension - her own. Physically diminutive, she also began to cultivate and celebrate her femininity. She was 28 when the idea of transitioning seemed feasible and 29 when she told her family and friends she would transition.

Her family has come around - she feels closer to them now than she ever had. Of her decision, she says it brought her to life - that she finally can breathe and that she loves the person she is.

Her story was compelling and we were all riveted. We all realized how difficult the journey can be for all those in the LGBT community, in search of their identity, especially without a support system. We thank her for sharing her story with us!



**McHenry CHAPTER**

*By Toni Weaver*

Our hats are off to Nancy Johnson (PFLAG Oak Park) for her gift of "A Place in the Middle," the story of a young student in one of Honolulu's schools that teach Hawaiian culture. Nancy not only gave each chapter that belongs to the PFLAG Council of Northern Illinois a copy of the DVD and study guide, but she also brought at least 50 copies of it to the PFLAG National Convention in Nashville to be handed out gratuitously!

People who are "in the middle" are highly revered in Hawaiian culture, for they possess both the spirit of the masculine and the feminine. These people who are "in the middle" may be gay or lesbian or they may identify as transgender. There was a bit of ambiguity in the film about the exact meaning, but perhaps there is no exact meaning. The point may very well be that there are people who sit outside of traditional norms for sexual orientation and gender identity...

Because the film uses so many traditional Hawaiian words, we had a flip chart prepared in advance with the words and their meanings clearly delineated. Afterwards, we were told that it was very helpful in understanding the film.

The crowning achievement for our chapter was the "Supporting our Transgender Students" workshop which took place on February 19 with nearly 240 people in attendance at the morning and afternoon sessions. The 3.5 hour workshop was presented twice to allow as many school personnel as possible to attend. Our chapter paid the presenters' fees and provided workers who acted as hosts and hostesses, signing people in, holding microphones for questions, handing out resource packets, and directing people to the "necessary" facilities. The Regional Office of Education paid any school to bring in substitute teachers, handled registration, and provided the distribution list which included school personnel from McHenry County and surrounding counties, social service agencies, medical and mental health providers, and nursing students from McHenry County College. The college provided the conference center free of charge, provided all the food, made copies of all the resources our presenters brought, and provided student workers to assemble the resource packets. It was an amazing collaborative effort that reaped dividends beyond our wildest hopes! Nothing but praise has been pouring in!

Our March program is a direct result of the workshop. During the lunch break we had the opportunity to hear the very personal story of the college's Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Services. Her gay brother was rejected by their Pentecostal minister father but totally accepted by their mother. After their mother's death, her brother tragically committed suicide. This is going to be a very powerful chapter meeting as we discuss sexual orientation and religion, the experience of "gayness" within the African-American community, and the tragedy when religion and homosexuality collide, leading to loss of life.



**Tinley Park CHAPTER**

*By Deborah Medina*

PFLAG Tinley Park is slowly growing with new attendees each week. We are conveniently located in the south suburbs. Join us on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 2pm at Zion Church, 17100 69th Ave, Tinley Park (east of Harlem Ave).

## DuPage CHAPTER

By Bernadette & Ron Whitfield

On February 21, 2016 we had a great meeting; many new people attended (10 already this year!) and we had a wonderful speaker.

Those who attended appreciated the presentation by Diane Johanning, a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC). Diane has worked in the mental health field for nearly 20 years. She works with individuals struggling with depression and anxiety, and she specializes in Healthy Spirituality and in helping to provide a safe place for those struggling to come to terms with issues of sexual identity or sexual orientation. Her Spirituality Groups and Coming Out Support Groups are much needed and well-received in the western suburbs of Chicago. Diane's primary office is in Wheaton, IL.

Diane shared deeply personal feelings and struggles that resonated with us. She also stayed for the entire meeting. Two days later we received the following message (excerpts) from her:

*Dear Bernadette and Ron,*

*Just a quick note to say Thank You for the warm embrace I received from you all on Sunday. It was truly a gift for me to be with you. I was on your website and saw that you participate in the Amazon smile campaign, so I signed up to donate to you! -I think the work of PFLAG is so much bigger than you or I or anyone truly knows - because this one issue is a snapshot of the healing the world needs, and so as we do our part, I believe we'll never know of the ripple effects... It is truly magnificent to think about!!*

*Thank you again, and I hope to be with you in the future and perhaps collaborate in any ways we might dream up!*

*With so much gratitude,  
Diane*

### Meeting Announcements

School Outreach – There is growing interest at administration levels in DuPage schools. Anyone interested in helping out should contact one of our chapter officers.

We have been in communication with staff at Glen Crest Junior High (Glen Ellyn, Glenbard District 89). We have given them booklets, pamphlets, and electronic files regarding LGBTQ+ issues. Particularly relevant is information on transgender children. There are 2 trans

students at Glen Crest. Provided an informational package to Glenbard High School District 87 Board of Education – as they prepare for the arrival of transgender students. Policies are at issue and it is important that LGBTQ+ issues be represented.

Paul, Gail, and Brittany Hansen; Jo Ann Larsen, and Bernadette & Ron Whitfield visited the Wheaton Warrenville South High School GSA on February 9th. About 30 students attended. We provided booklets, references to videos, and links to other LGBTQ+ information.

We are communicating with the DuPage Regional Office of Education. The long-range plan is to help them develop educational programs for district administrators and school administrators and faculty regarding LGBTQ+ issues. We hope to meet with the ROE administrator soon to begin planning for next school year. This should be an important contact for extending PFLAG's reach and influence in DuPage County schools. The key person is Dr. Darlene J. Ruscetti, ROE Superintendent. Her statement, on the ROE home page is: "We at the DuPage Regional Office of Education know that education is the currency of the information age. It is not simply a road to opportunity and success... but a prerequisite. Our role is to support DuPage County schools to ensure that every child meets or exceeds his or her potential. High standards, quality teachers and leaders, and strong accountability are hallmarks of our office."

March 4th, 2016 – Several chapter members are attending a workshop sponsored by the DuPage Community Network on "LGBTQ+ Youth: Incorporating Affirming Policies, Practices and Supporting Intersectionality in Schools." Reservations can be made at about the workshop at

<https://www.dupage.k12.il.us/register/course.php?recid=6445>

Near the bottom (look for details) is a link to register. You will be redirected to

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lgbtq-students-affirming-policies-practices-and-supporting-intersectionality-in-schools-tickets-19844556603>

There look for a green button labeled "REGISTER." It is located in different places in different browsers! Registration is free and earns educators 5 PD hours.

The course description is:

LGBTQ+ youth, particularly transgender and gender expansive youth, are present in all schools in DuPage

County, with youth coming out at younger ages every year. This day of learning and discussion led by members of the DuPage Community Network: Professionals Supporting LGBTQ+ youth will assist teachers, administrators and school support with navigating ways to provide safe and affirming services to LGBTQ+ students. The day will begin with a keynote speech from Principal Jeremy Majeski, of South Berwyn School District 100, who will discuss the inclusive policy supporting transgender students that the Berwyn School District implemented in the fall of 2015 for their K-8 schools. Attendees will understand affirming policies and how to introduce similar policies into schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Additionally, the day will cover topics to help engage professionals in supporting some of the most vulnerable students including: LGBTQ+ youth and the Juvenile Justice System and the needs of LGBTQ+ youth of color. Finally, attendees will spend the afternoon in break out sessions focusing on the unique needs of the populations they serve including supporting LGBTQ+ youth in the college search process and learning how to be inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities in an age-appropriate way for elementary and middle school students. Professionals will have the opportunity to network and connect with resources in the community such as the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, PFLAG, Youth Outlook and 360 Youth Services.

March 6th, 2016 – Chicago Her HRC Presents: 5th Annual Va ~ Va ~ Vaudeville! Tickets are still available.

Next month's speaker is Rachel Arfa from Equip for Equality.

The following are links to information about February's speaker, Diane Johanning.

[http://www.elysiumcounseling.com/About\\_Diane.php](http://www.elysiumcounseling.com/About_Diane.php)

<http://www.elysiumcounseling.com/Services.php>

[http://www.elysiumcounseling.com/Home\\_Page.php](http://www.elysiumcounseling.com/Home_Page.php)



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<http://www.youtube.com/user/pflagnational>

Support the PFLAG Council of Northern IL when you shop on Amazon:  
<http://www.smile.amazon.com>

# WELCOME

**Parents of Transgender Individuals (PTI)  
NORTH SHORE**

Meeting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday each month  
6:00 p.m.

Winnetka Presbyterian Church  
1255 Willow Rd  
Winnetka, IL 60093

a monthly gathering for

# LGBTQ APIs & Families



Co-sponsored by Christ Church of Chicago (Tri-C) and Invisible to Invincible: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago (i2i)

We happily announce the first monthly gathering for Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) and family members of API LGBTQ people. Family members include people from families of origin and chosen family. Multiracial and adoptive families welcome. We'd like to come together and create a space where people can share stories, information, resources, discuss, and provide support to one another.

Consider joining us if you or your family member:

- Is questioning about sexual orientation or gender identity, or identifies as LGBTQ
- Would like to be in community with other API LGBTQ people and their families
- Has questions about “coming out” to family, friends, or communities
- Would like to listen and share about experiences with people who may share racial, ethnic, or cultural identities with you

**WHAT: Monthly Gathering for API LGBTQ people and their families**

**WHEN: 4th Sunday each month, from 3:00-5:00p.m. (First Meeting Nov. 22nd)**

**WHERE: Christ Church of Chicago (Tri-C), 6047 N. Rockwell, Chicago, IL 60659**

**CTA: 155 Devon Bus, 84 Peterson Bus**

**For More Info: Contact i2i at [chicagoi2i@yahoo.com](mailto:chicagoi2i@yahoo.com) or Tri-C at [pastor@christchurchchicago.net](mailto:pastor@christchurchchicago.net)**

These gatherings will take place at Christ Church of Chicago, an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ that is mostly Japanese-American. However, the gathering itself will not be centered around any particular religious or ethnic group.

Gender neutral restrooms are available. The church is not wheelchair accessible. If there is any way that we can support you accessing this space, please let us know.

We aim to create an affirming space for East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander LGBTQ people and their families (of origin and chosen), whether API or not. These gatherings are cosponsored by Christ Church of Chicago (Tri-C), and Invisible to Invincible: Asian Pacific Islander Pride of Chicago (i2i).

**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO BECOME A MEMBER...SUPPORT PFLAG**

By becoming a PFLAG member, you will help provide support, education and advocacy. All information we collect from you on this form will remain confidential, and we will only share it within PFLAG.

Membership runs from October 1 to September 30; no partial-year membership is available.

Please check:

New Membership  Renewal Membership  Donation



(Name) \_\_\_\_\_

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_

(Address) \_\_\_\_\_

(City) (State) (ZIP) \_\_\_\_\_

(Preferred Phone  Home  Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

(E-mail Address) \_\_\_\_\_

(Notes or In Memory of  In Honor of) \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:**

PFLAG Superhero \$500+  Parents Flag Waver \$100  Household/Individual Membership \$45

PFLAG Hero \$250  Supporting Membership \$60  Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**SELECT A CHAPTER:**

Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

Hinsdale  Aurora/Fox Valley  McHenry County  McHenry Parents of Transgendered Individuals  Deerfield  Chicago/Metro  Chicago Parents of Transgendered Individuals  Joliet  Kankakee/Will/Iroquois  Palatine  Oak Park  DeKalb County  DuPage  Downers Grove  Tinley Park

Check enclosed payable to PFLAG

Please charge my credit card ( Visa  MasterCard  Amex  Discover)

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(Exp Date DD/MM) \_\_\_\_\_ (CVV - V/MC/D 3 digits on the back - AX 4 digits on the front) \_\_\_\_\_

(Name on Card) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return form to your chapter representative or mail form and to:

**PFLAG Membership P.O. Box 734, Elmhurst, IL 60126**



**PFLAG Aurora/Fox Valley**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday – 2 pm  
 New England Congregational Church  
 406 W Galena Blvd, Aurora 60506  
 pflagaurorafoxvalley@pflagillinois.com

**PFLAG Metro Chicago**

Meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – 2 pm  
 Center on Halsted (Senior Room)  
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613  
 pflagchicagometro@pflagillinois

**PFLAG Deerfield**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – 7:15 pm  
 Congregation BJBE  
 1201 Lake Cook Rd, Deerfield 60015  
 pflagdeerfield@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG DeKalb County**

Meetings held LAST Tuesday – 7 pm  
 Federated Church of Sycamore  
 612 W State St  
 Sycamore, IL 60178  
 pflagdekalbcounty@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG DuPage**

Meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – 2 pm  
 St Paul Lutheran Church  
 515 S Wheaton Ave, Wheaton 60187  
 pflagdupage@yahoo.com  
 www.pflagdupage.org

**PFLAG Tinley Park - NEW**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday – 2-4 pm  
 Zion Lutheran Church  
 17100 69<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 Tinley Park, IL 60477

**PFLAG Downers Grove**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday – 7p.m.  
 First Congregational UCC  
 1047 Curtiss  
 Downers Grove, IL 60515

**PFLAG Hinsdale**

Meetings held 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday – 2 pm  
 Unitarian Church Hinsdale  
 11 W Maple, Hinsdale 60521  
 pflaghinsdale@pflagillinois

**PFLAG Joliet**

Contact Lea Anne Stoughton  
 lastoughton@gmail.com  
 815-793-5138

**PFLAG Will, Kankakee, Iroquois**

Contact Barbara Lohrbach  
 815-932-2845

**PFLAG McHenry**

Meetings held 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday – 7 pm  
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church  
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd  
 McHenry 60050  
 pflagwoodstockmchenry@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG Oak Park**

Meetings held 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday – 3 pm  
 First United Church  
 848 Lake St, Oak Park 60304  
 pflagoakpark@pflagillinois.org

**PFLAG Palatine**

Contact Deirdre O'Connell  
 herself68@yahoo.com

**Parents of Transgender (Chicago)**

Meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday – 7 pm  
 Center on Halsted  
 3656 N Halsted, Chicago 60613  
 parentsoftransgender@pflagillinois.org

**Parents of Transgender (McHenry)**

Meetings are held the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday – 7 p.m.  
 Tree of Life Unitarian Church  
 5603 W Bull Valley Rd, McHenry 60050  
 flynnmb12@gmail.com  
 marygenzler@hotmail.com

**Parents of Transgender (North Shore) - NEW**

Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday – 6 p.m.  
 Winnetka Presbyterian Church  
 1255 Winnetka Rd  
 Winnetka, IL 60093

**Please join us for any chapter meeting.**

**If you are not comfortable meeting in a large group, arrangements can be made to meet one-on-one.**

**Contact any one of our chapters for more information.**